150. Needs of the Parur Municipality.

MR. K. R. VENKITESVARA AIYAR (*Member, Municipal Council, Parur*) stated that, from the way in which local self-government was introduced and developed in the State, it was clear that the Government were convinced of the necessity for training the people in governing themselves. As society progressed and mass education advanced, people began to appreciate the importance of the step taken by the Government and began to work out their destinies so far as circumstances permitted. In the early stages of the Town Improvement Committees, when local self-government was in its embryonic stage, the chief functions of the committees were mainly directed towards sanitation of the towns. The necessary funds were obtained both from the Government and the public and the functions were discharged, subject to the firm control of the Government, in the matter of appropriating funds. With the passing of the Municipal Regulation and the establishment of Municipal Councils, more powers were given to the latter in levying and realising taxes, license fees, etc.; but the Government grant was gradually withdrawn, although the control exercised by them was never relaxed. Strictly speaking, the Councils were empowered to do only such things as the Government were willing to sanction and not a pie could be spent without their sanction. Such interference on the part of the Government was not justifiable. The budgets, very carefully prepared by the Council after taking into consideration the local needs, were not sanctioned in their entirety by the Government, many items of expenditure being cut down. The receipt side of the budget was also raised on the recommendation of the Account Officer. The procedure greatly hampered the work of the Councils and prevented their working according to a programme. Such interference was unnecessary inasmuch as every Council was concerned only with its own welfare and budgeted only for such expenditure as was absolutely necessary consistent with its revenue. Unless the money realised from the public was spent for promoting the public welfare, there would be no justification for collecting the various taxes imposed and keeping a surplus. As regards the alterations in the receipt side of the budgets, the Councils were, by such alteration, constrained to squeeze out more money from the people than what they could reasonably expect. The member urged that the above facts should be borne in mind before Municipal budgets were altered in future. Again, when a Council applied for additional funds for an unexpected purpose after the annual budget had been passed by the Government, the application was refused. Such refusal, in the member's view, was a direct insult to the Council inasmuch as it was the unanimous opinion of a respectable body of persons that was being rejected by the Government.

All the roads and lanes in the Parur taluk were under the control of the Public Works or the Maramat Department. Excepting the Main Central road, about a mile long within the centre of the town, all the other portions of the road and the other roads and lanes were left in a most unsatisfactory condition. Some of the pathways were too bad to be called roads. Parur was as important as any other taluk. There was a District Court and a High School, which latter might be called the best in the State, judged from the examination results. But the roads in the taluk were in a poor condition. Most of the lanes required immediate metalling, the soil being sandy and porous. Every year many parts of the taluk were under water for about two months during the monsoons and the roads and lanes were breached. The repairs carried out were not lasting and the roads relapsed to their original condition. If the Executive Engineer were addressed, he would say that he was entrusted with the duty of maintaining only one or two roads. The Municipal Council was not rich enough to take up the maintenance of others. The member urged the need for the better maintenance of the roads and lanes.

The Cutcherry *todu* situated to the west of the District Hospital and near the gate of the Public Offices was neglected. Its banks were not protected with masonry walls and were consequently breached in places during the rains. The canal was also silted up and rendered shallow and unfit for traffic. Besides, the *todu* was a hotbed of mosquitoes, a source of danger to the patients in the hospital. The canal should be deepened and repaired and protected with masonry wall on either side.

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The Kala *todu*, the only central drainage in the town, was also maintained in a bad condition. The necessity for improving the canal had been set out in the Council's letter No. 158/18, dated the 9th October 1926, addressed to the Government. The work should be taken up at an early date.

The drainage on the west of the local Catholic church had all the defects of the Kala *todu*. It was both marshy and shallow and should be repaired and maintained properly.

Lastly, the member spoke about the need for representation of Municipalities on the Legislative Council. Municipalities were the chief parts of the taluks and as such had better claims for representation than the taluks themselves. Municipal Councils paved the way for local self-government and everything connected with Municipal administration was entitled to have as much claim on the Legislative Council as rural administration. A Municipal representative on the Legislative Council would be of greater help in solving difficult problems of Municipal administration than individual opinions from each Municipality. Further, the policy of the Government seemed to be to hand over public roads, schools, etc., to Municipal Councils. Such a policy of decentralisation would gradually develop itself and in course of time would replace the present administration by a central government. One member of the Legislative Council should be a representative of the Municipalities.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Venkitesvara Aiyar, you deprecate the interference by the Government in the Municipal administration, by which, I presume, you mean that the Government should not keep as close a hand as they do at present upon the affairs of your Municipality. Strangely enough, several other speakers in this Assembly have been clamouring for further Government interference. They want the Government to do this, to do that, to do the other, and undertake duties the municipalities are called upon to undertake. It puzzles me how to reconcile these divergent views. In your case, the complaint seems to be mainly that the Government scrutinize your budget and make modifications in it. That is necessary because experience shows that unpractised hands too often, alas, concoct what is supposed to be a budget in certain municipalities. Fortunately for municipalities, a paternal Central Government utilise the services of their financial experts to correct errors and defects in municipal budgets. This is all done with the best intentions in the world and all done for the good of the municipalities. If sometimes the Government withholds sanction to an additional allotment outside the budget, that is only because the Government in their wisdom or in their belief in their own wisdom, prevent the municipalities from spending money in directions in which the Government do not consider it necessary. To what extent exactly the Government should guide municipalities and assist them, depends entirely on each individual municipality. I can point to one or two municipalities in Travancore where very little of Government's steadying influence is necessary; other municipalties I can point to again, in which Government have seriously debated the question of suspending the municipalities altogether and taking over the whole of the administration into their own hands. I hasten to say that Parur is not one such.

As regards better maintenance of roads and drains within the municipal limits, I quite agree with you that it is necessary to maintain them better and I hope that the municipality will hasten to do so.

The Cutcherry *todu* and Kala *todu* questions will also be considered.

Then we come to the one important problem, whether municipalities should be jointly or severally represented on the Legislative Council. Till the present Council works out the term of its natural life, I do not like to interfere with its constitution.

151. Municipal Reforms.

MR. K. N. JANARDANAN PILLAI (*Member, Municipal Council, Quilon*) urged the need for an annual All-Travancore Municipal Conference to be held under the auspices of the Government with chosen representatives from each Municipal

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